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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 001833

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [CH](#) [TK](#) [IS](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: DUTCH PM BALKENENDE ON CHINA, TURKEY, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD SOBEL for Reasons 1/4 (B...

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2004-07-20

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Embassy The Hague

SECRET

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SUBJECT: DUTCH PM BALKENENDE ON CHINA, TURKEY, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD SOBEL for Reasons 1/4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Balkenende told Ambassador Sobel on July 20 the EU has not yet reached consensus on lifting the China Arms Embargo before the December EU-China summit. While strong voices in the EU are pushing for a quick (but not unconditional) lift, others now appear less convinced and a final decision has not yet been made. On Turkey, Balkenende reiterated that a deal is a deal and the EU's decision will depend on the European Commission's October report, the drafting of which the Dutch are following closely. Ambassador Sobel urged the EU to maintain pressure on Arafat and the Palestinians to make needed reforms, and noted that the Forum for the Future proposed at the G-8 summit provided a good venue for EU-U.S. cooperation on the region. Ambassador Sobel also raised Sudan briefly and noted standing requests for additional security for the Embassy. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Ambassador Sobel met with Dutch Prime Minister Jan Pieter Balkenende on July 20 to discuss the Dutch EU Presidency and related issues prior to the Dutch cabinet going on vacation. Balkenende noted that he would be taking the traditional long Dutch vacation in August, but would remain in the Netherlands in case Presidency business required his involvement. During the nearly one-hour discussion, Balkenende and the Ambassador discussed the China Arms Embargo, Turkish accession to the EU, and the Middle East. Balkenende was accompanied by his chief foreign policy advisor, Rob Swartbol; POLCOUNS (notetaker) accompanied Ambassador Sobel.

CHINA ARMS EMBARGO: MORE THAN ONE OPTION?

3. (C) Ambassador Sobel stressed that the China Arms Embargo was quickly rising to the top of the U.S.-EU agenda. Chinese backsliding on human rights over the past two years was deeply troubling, as was the continued Chinese threat to regional stability. Lifting the arms embargo before seeing real progress in these areas, he stressed, ran counter to the Dutch step by step approach, would be counterproductive in terms of influencing Chinese behavior. The Chinese were still refusing to allow the UN's special rapporteur on torture, van Boven, to visit despite having earlier agreed to do so, he noted. (Balkenende suggested that the Chinese might have problems with van Boven himself, rather than with his office, noting that the Spanish had also had problems with van Boven.) The Code of Conduct, he added, was not an adequate substitute for the embargo, and we strongly doubted the EU's ability to put stronger mechanisms in place. The U.S. was looking to the Dutch, as EU president, to make sure that the U.S. was not surprised by developments in this area.

4. (S) In response, Balkenende said that the China Arms Embargo was a sensitive and evolving issue within the EU. At one point, there seemed to be a strong consensus for a quick lift, he said, but now other tendencies could be emerging.

Even Chirac, Balkenende added, now was less adamant about lifting the embargo than in the past. (Balkenende noted that Chirac had earlier tried at the last minute to insert language on lifting the embargo into a Council statement, but had backed down when challenged.) He stressed that all views would be taken into account before making a decision, and denied that the EU was prepared to lift the embargo without any conditions. China would have to take some steps (NFI) to merit a decision to lift, he stated. That said, the desire to strengthen EU-China ties in the near term was very strong within the EU. The arms embargo was one instrument the EU could use to influence the relationship, but not the only one.

15. (C) Ambassador Sobel reiterated the need for transparency and good communication as the issue developed. The Irish, he pointed out, had not worked actively as president to develop a consensus position, and the issue had naturally moved to the next presidency without a resolution. Swartbol intervened to note that while various tendencies did exist within the EU, the strongest tendency at this point was to lift the embargo, possibly as early as the fall.

TURKEY: ONCE AGAIN, YES.....BUT  
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16. (C) Turning to Turkey, Ambassador Sobel took note of Balkenende's recent positive public statements and asked where the issue currently stood. Balkenende observed that the exact wording of the European Commission's October report would be critical. The report, he predicted, would probably state neither that Turkey had met all the Copenhagen criteria fully, nor that it had failed to meet them; most likely, the report would be positive but identify work remaining to be done. In that case, he continued, the two realistic options for the EU were either: A) to set a date for accession negotiations, but make it conditional on achieving progress in remaining areas, or B) to ask Turkey to take certain specific steps with the clear understanding that a date would be set as soon as they are accomplished.

7 (C) Balkenende reiterated that the EU must not rewrite the rules to help or hinder Turkey's bid for accession -- a deal is a deal. Talk of offering the Turks a privileged partnership or other substitute (as the French and others, including Christian Democrats in the European Parliament, had hinted), he stressed, would not be acceptable. At the same time, Balkenende made clear that negotiations on accession would probably last for at several years, and that the Turks, in his view, understood this as well. The Turks' interests would be taken into account in the EU's decision, he said, but the decision must also be sustainable domestically throughout the EU. A big part of the EU's public relations work, therefore, would be to convince skeptical national parliaments and populations that agreeing to begin negotiations would not lead to a flood of Turkish immigrants or other undesirable outcomes. Balkenende predicted that Chirac would ultimately side with Germany despite domestic French opposition in order to preserve his relationship with Schroeder.

18. (S) Balkenende made clear that U.S. sensitivities would be taken into account as the EU made its decision, and that the USG position was well known. He urged the USG, however, not to give opponents to Turkish accession more fuel by making public statements that appeared provocative in the European context; for domestic reasons, Chirac and other European leaders would feel compelled to respond to US statements on the issue. Ambassador Sobel stressed that the USG would be following the issue closely and urged that we be kept informed. Swartbol noted that the Commission had just started the process of drafting its report. He strongly suggested that the Dutch (and he personally) would be able to follow and perhaps influence the drafting process, albeit behind the scenes.

MIDDLE EAST: KEEPING EU PRESSURE ON ARAFAT;  
FORUM FOR THE FUTURE  
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19. (C) Ambassador Sobel stressed that developments in the Middle East made it imperative to keep pressure on Yasser Arafat to reform. The situation is developing quickly, and the EU's special relationship with the Palestinians could be a useful force for bringing about needed changes. On the Broader Middle East/North Africa initiative, Ambassador Sobel highlighted the Forum for the Future announced at the G-8 Sea Island summit.

SUDAN AND SECURITY  
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110. (C) In closing, Ambassador briefly raised the crisis in Sudan and urged the EU to free up funding quickly to support the AU peacekeeping force. He also noted that the Embassy had requested additional security measures two years ago

which it had not yet received. Balkenende promised to bring up the matter personally with the minister of interior.

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